



Sgt. Norma Hill exchanges some last minute hugs and kisses with her husband and son before departing on a year-long deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. (Photo by Army Spc. Lynne Steely)



Congratulations to (left to right) Staff Sgt. Barnhill, Staff Sgt. Mays and Staff Sgt. Lorenzo on their re-enlistment December 17. (Photo by Army Spc. Lynne Steely)

Saying Goodbye

M A N N H E I M , Germany-It was a day filled with many emotions as the soldiers of the 18th Military Police Brigade said goodbye to their loved ones. The Brigade departed by bus November 30 marking the beginning of a year-long deployment to Southwest Asia in Support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. "It's never easy having to leave your loved ones

behind," said one soldier, "but we've been called upon by our country to do a job."

The Brigade arrived safe and sound in Kuwait December 1, anxious to get started on its mission. They returned from Iraq in February of this year, but due to an Army-wide shortage of Military Police, the Brigade was called upon again in less than one year's time.

Right: 1st Sgt. Arbec gives final roll call as the soldiers load the bus single file. (Photo by Army Spc. Lynne Steely)



COMMANDERS CORNER

By Col. James B. Brown

Dear
Friends,
Families
and Soldiers of the
Ever Vigilant Brigade!



Greetings from Camp Victory Iraq! The Headquarters of the 18th MP Brigade has now completed the TOA process and will unfurl our colors on the porch of our Headquarters at 1000 hrs. December 26. This has been a very exciting month for us as we transitioned through Kuwait and moved up North into Baghdad.

When we arrived in Kuwait, we received a Christmas present from the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army! We were each presented with \$1,200 worth of the newest and technologically advanced equipment in the world. We were issued new helmets which are lighter and fit better than our old Kevlar helmets. We were issued new desert boots that are more akin to running shoes than traditional boots—very comfortable! We also got wicking polartech long underwear and wicking t-shirts as well as socks and new gloves. We all got new goggles, a camel back hydration system and new Wiley-X sun/protective glasses. We wear them all the time when on missions in order to protect our eyes from all the airborne dust and dirt during operations as well as any other threats to our eyes.

So, while some of our boxes from home might not make it just in time for Christmas, we did get something under the tree!

We are still finishing getting settled in here, but should be falling into a “Battle Rhythm”—that means routine in normal words—within the next couple of days. We have already received a good number of packages from home and want to encourage you all to keep it coming! Getting mail is one of the great joys that all soldiers share in common and we are so thankful for everything that you send! That address is: **NAME, HHC, 18th MP Bde, Camp Victory, APO AE 09342.**

Our Headquarters is located in a building that resembles a marble beach house with two structures and it sits in a small lake within the large Camp Victory complex. On old maps of the area, it is called “the book house”. It has a small bridge from the larger to the smaller one. We have some very well trained fish who sit under this bridge waiting to be fed everything from potato chips to muffins. One of the fish is so large it appears that he will eat anything. We have a small PX located near our trailers and it is open 24/7, but the keyword is small. We also have a gym open 24/7—the uniform for working out is DCU’s and you bring your weapon and body armor to the gym—a little different from working out at home!

As we move in, we now have a slew of new companies coming to join the bri-

gade from the U.S. Some of these are even of Air Force members!!! In order to assist our newest members, we left behind a robust cell from the Brigade HQ’s in Kuwait to help them get their additional equipment and to speed them through all available training in Kuwait. MAJ Dave Oberlander as our XO, SFC Chris Warner as our Bde Equal Opportunity Advisor, MSG Mark Brown and SSG Marcel Vanie from our supply section are doing the outstanding work of welcoming our newest members. The newest members to the team are the 343d Base Liaison Detachment from New Jersey. This is a team of 12 highly experienced soldiers who bring a wealth of knowledge and expertise to our family here. The Commander of this team is LTC James Smith from Louisville, KY. When not mobilized, he works with the Louisville Police Department. Welcome to the Ever Vigilant team 343!

In conclusion, I want to thank God for all He has done to prepare us for this great mission ahead. I also want to thank you our families and friends. We have been so blessed to have such a wonderful team of helpmates and we thank everyone involved in supporting our home and Rear Detachments! The heart of this unit is found in the love and support of its families and members. Please be safe where ever you are and we all wish you a Happy New Year! **EVER VIGILANT! --**

Col. Jim Brown, VIGILANT 6

Brigade Briefs

◆ A re-enlistment ceremony was held Friday December 17 at Brigade Headquarters for Staff Sgt Barnhill, Staff Sgt. Mays and Staff Sgt. Lorenzo. Congratulations! HOOAH!

◆ A Christmas Party was held in building 113 Christmas Eve at 1830. Chaplain Evans held a Christmas Eve Service following the party. Thanks to everyone who attended.

◆ A Transfer of Authority ceremony was held at 1000 December 26 at the Brigade Headquarters. The 16th MP Brigade relinquished authority to the 18th MP Brigade. Thanks to the 16th for a job well done. Mission Complete!

◆ Help! We need your submissions for the Brigade Newsletter. Artists, writers, poets, photographers; please help us make this newsletter a success! Please email all submissions to:
lynne.steely@us.army.mil

Journey to Baghdad



Sgt. Gregory, Pfc. Trevino and Sgt Watson watch as the plane that will carry them to Kuwait gets ready for boarding. (Photo by Army Spc. Lynne Steely)



Left: Boarding the the plane at Rhein Main Air Base. Above: Finally, on the way to Kuwait.

VIGILANT TIMES

Produced by the 18th Military Police Brigade
Public Affairs Office, Baghdad, Iraq
Phone: DSN 302-242-0112

Maj. Rob Simmons.....S-1 OIC
Spc. Lynne Steely.....Photojournalist

Keeping busy at Camp



After meeting up with our vehicles at Camp Virginia, Kuwait, we spent a couple of days focusing on maintenance to make sure the vehicles were in tip-top shape. Looks like this one's going to need a little work!



It was an early Christmas for the soldiers of the 18th. After an afternoon trip to Camp Doha, everyone received a duffel bag filled with new equipment from Rapid Fielding Initiative (RFI). Here Pfc. Idalia Ortiz selects a new pair of boots.



Goodbye Camp Virginia, hello Baghdad! For some soldiers this was their first ride on a C-130.



Time out at the firing range. Soldiers spent an afternoon at the range to ensure that weapons were ready for the upcoming mission.

New Feature!

Families, we need your help! Our newsletter will be filled each month with photos and stories of the great things the Brigade is doing in Iraq. We want to see what's going on at home! Please submit your photos and we will choose one to feature on our

Photo of the Month page. A few ideas include, making care-packages for the troops, events and ceremonies, children and even an adorable pet. Please include a note to let us know what's taking place in the photograph. Send photos to:

lynne.steely@us.army.mil

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!



Soldiers Speak...

Now that your getting settled in at Camp Victory, what one thing do you wish you would have brought with you?



Staff Sgt. Emmanuel Lorenzo-

"My bicycle. It would be easier to get around without having to depend on the shuttle bus."



Pfc. Luis Trevino-

"A good camera. There are alot of things to see here and I'd like to share them with my family and friends."



Pvt. Lonnie Coleman-

"A laptop. Then I wouldn't have to walk so far late at night to use the computer."



Sgt. 1st Class Elizabeth Graybill-

"A small stereo/cd player. Then I could listen to music while I excercise or do other things in my room without having to use headphones."

CONNECTIONS

By Lt. Col. Thomas Evans

A number of us recently took a whirlwind tour of South Central Iraq. We visited soldiers in seven camps spread over a large geographic area. As we drove through the small villages, I was inspired by the Christmas Story in real life. We saw a man walking along side his wife, who was riding on a donkey, helping me see Joseph and Mary walking from Nazareth to Bethlehem where Jesus would be born. We saw shepherds standing watch over their sheep. Some have said that Jesus could not have been born in December, because Middle eastern shepherds do not have their sheep out on the hills in the winter.

It has been down in the high 20's at night, and shepherds and sheep were dispersed throughout the region. I now have a better sense of the birth night, and angels calling out to the shepherds, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." I didn't see anyone riding a camel, but we did see camels, and they provided the Wise Men facet of the Christmas Story. At the time of Christ's birth, a foreign army was in Israel even as is the case here in this land. To say the least, this will be a Christmas I will never forget. I don't

need to go looking for a living manger scene, this land is a manger scene.

We also visited a location adjacent to the ruins of ancient Babylon. A lot of work has been done to rebuild some of the walls and gates, so you can see the old and the new, but what a privilege to stand on ground with such a significant history. When the Old Testament prophet Daniel was a young man, Jerusalem was overrun by the army of King Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel and many others were taken captive and relocated to Babylon. Babylon is the place where King Nebuchadnezzar built the furnace and threw Daniel's three friends into the furnace. But, when the King looked inside, he saw four men inside the furnace. God Himself entered that furnace and met with the three men who refused to violate their loyalty to God. King Nebuchadnezzar told the men to come out of the furnace, and when they came out, not a hair on their heads was singed, not a garment of clothing was scorched. This is the place from which we get the saying, "the handwriting is on the wall." One night while King Belshazzar hosted a great party,

God caused a hand to appear, writing a message to the king. God told him that he had been weighed in the balances, and was found "wanting". In 712 B.C., God gave Isaiah the message that he would use Cyrus to subdue nations. 176 years later, on the same night that God was writing on King Belshazzar's wall, Cyrus broke into Babylon and removed Belshazzar from the throne and concluded the epoch of the Babylonian Empire. Babylon is also the place where Daniel refused to set aside his prayer time, and King Darius threw him in the lions' den. The next morning Daniel came out unscathed, and gave glory to God. What a great time and place to be reminded of God's power to save lives, and to overthrow old kingdoms and establish new ones.

Our God is a Miracle Working God, so may this Christmas be your miracle event. May the Christ Child reign in your home, and in your heart.



TIDBITS

Financial Insider

New tax relief Act-

Legislation Signed by President Bush on Veterans Day increases death gratuity payment to \$12,000 and provides that the full payment is tax-free. This is part of the Military Family Tax Relief Act of 2003 and is retroactive to Sept. 10, 2001.

Scholarships for Military children-

The Scholarships for Military Children program is beginning its fifth year. This program is sponsored by the Fisher House Foundation and funded by the manufacturers and industry supporting commissaries. Nearly 2,000 scholarships have been awarded totaling over \$3 million to the children of active duty, Guard, Reserve and retired service members. Applications for the 2005 program are available at commissaries or online at : <http://www.militaryscholar.org>

Websites

In support of the troops

www.fallenpatriotfund.org

Financial help for families of U.S. military personnel who were killed or seriously wounded during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

www.treatthetroops.org

Jeanette "the cookie lady" Cram tells you how you can prepare cookie packages for deployed soldiers.

www.usocares.org

For people who want to contribute but don't have a lot of spare time, they can donate money to help the United

Legal Tips

SCRA -

President Bush signed the Service Members' Civil Relief Act into law Dec. 19, 2003 which updates provisions and adds additional protections to the previous Soldiers' and sailors' Relief Act of 1940.

This act protects deployed military personnel who are having difficulty meeting their personal financial and legal obligations. A few of these protections include:

- ✓ **Reduced interest rates**
- ✓ **Eviction protection**
- ✓ **Termination of home or car lease**

Contact your JAG office for more information.



Service Organization put together care packages.

www.operationmilitarypride.org

This website has a wealth of information for troop support and their families including photos, chat and message boards.

For the children of Iraq

www.iraqischools.com

You can help give the children of Iraq a brighter future through donations to build and furnish schools in Iraq. (Photo by Army Spc. Kristopher Joseph)

